



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MISCELLANY

THE VERY REV. JOHN EV. MOSETIZH VICAR-GENERAL OF PITTSBURGH, PA. A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Although the subject of this sketch played a fairly important part in our church affairs in his day, our historical records seem to have preserved but little more than his name. Therefore, in order to save his memory from undeserved oblivion the writer of these lines has resolved to gather up as far as possible, all the data still left on the subject, and what he succeeded in collecting after almost incredible difficulties, he respectfully presents here to the kind reader.¹

Father John Ev. Mosetizh (or Mozetic) was born 120 years ago at Bilje, a village at the foot of the now famous Carso plateau, about 5 miles south of the city of Gorizia or Goerz, Austria, November 13, 1797. Therefore he was neither an Italian nor a German but a Slovenian by birth. He completed his studies with distinction at Gorizia and was ordained to the priesthood, September 22, 1822. Thereupon he was appointed assistant of St. Ignatius' Church in the city of Gorizia, a position which he held till December 31, 1824. In 1823 he made a very successful concursus examination in moral theology. As he was highly gifted he was sent by his Archbishop to Vienna to take a post-graduate course in the famous Augustineum. He stayed there a little over a year, but could not finish his studies, for he was called home and made professor of Biblical sciences of the Old Testament and of the oriental languages in the Central Theological Seminary at Gorizia. He filled this position for twenty years, from April 10, 1826, until his departure for America. Moreover he acted as vice-rector of the imperial Academy of the gymnasium in the same city, from January 10, 1837 to 1846. In 1845 he was selected by the newly founded General Commission for the Holy Land in Vienna, to visit Syria and Palestine for the

¹ Most of the data found in this sketch is taken from the *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung im Kaiserthume Oesterreich*, Reports XIX-XXIV, and the *Gedenkbuch des Goldenen Jubilaeums der St. Marien Kirche in der Stadt Allegheny, Pa.* Pittsburgh, 1898. Thanks for valuable information are due also to Father Remigius Burge-meister, O.S.B., of Erie, Pa., and Dr. Andrew Pavlica, professor of theology at the Central Theological Seminary of Gorizia, before it was destroyed by the Italian guns in the present European war. Whether the precious archives of the archdiocese of Gorizia that furnished the writer with the data on Father Mosetizh's life in Austria were saved or not, is not known

purpose of investigating the condition and wants of the monasteries and missions of those places. Having completed this task during the following winter, he made his report to the prince-archbishop of Vienna.

However, he desired to devote himself to the service of the North American missions long before he undertook this journey. Hence he obtained admission into the Diocese of Pittsburgh through Father H. Lemke, of Loretto, Pa., who visited Vienna in March, 1845.² Soon after his return from the Holy Land he resigned his positions in Gorizia, left his native country, and departed for America.

His journey as well as his early activity in America were described by himself in a report written from Birmingham near Pittsburgh to the Leopoldine Association of Vienna, January 1, 1847:

I left my residence and my post at Gorizia on August 17, of last year, and set out upon my journey through Villach, Salzburg, etc., for Havre de Grace, where I boarded the mail boat, *Baltimore*, September 17, for America, as the land which after mature consideration I had with God's assistance chosen, with the intention of temporarily devoting my feeble services to its Catholic missions, the needs of which I had become acquainted with through so many descriptions and appeals. After a long, stormy and fatiguing sea voyage of thirty-six days, I stepped upon the soil of the western continent at New York, October 21, and after a few days of rest which I was very much in need of, I prepared forthwith to continue the journey to the place of my new destination at Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania, arriving there by the way of Philadelphia and Baltimore, on October 30. As the Right Rev. Bishop O'Connor was just absent on a canonical visitation in some section of his diocese, the fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer here, now presided over by the much praised missionary, Father John Nep. Neumann, from the Diocese of Budweis in Bohemia, as their superior, had the kindness to give me temporary lodging in their little home.

Hardly had I heard of the Right Reverend Bishop's return from his official journey, when I went to introduce myself to him, and was received by his Lordship with genuine joy and most hearty kindness. He invited me immediately to establish myself in the Bishop's house until I received my appointment. In the course of our conversation which we carried on in Italian, there came up the important question of what position I should like to have in the Diocese, to which I naturally replied, that I had come over here to be entirely at his free disposal; thereupon the kind Bishop took me by the hand and said: "You shall stay

² *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung*, Report XIX, p. 13 note. Dr. Joseph Salzbacher has April for March (cf. *Meine Reise nach Nord-Amerika im Jahre 1842*, p. 420. Vienna, 1845.). He calls Father Mosetizh *Doctor of Theology* (*ibid.*).

with me here in Pittsburgh, in order to give the necessary instruction to the theologians in my seminary, opened only two months ago, which—had you not come—I would be obliged to do myself.” Consequently, I am again teaching theology, that is to say dogma and moral, four hours every day, and in addition to that I am explaining Sacred Scriptures four hours a week. I go from the cathedral of Pittsburgh to Birmingham, a distance of 4 miles, where the seminary building stands, and back again, four times a day. The seminary consists in a small farm house amidst an orchard, comprising 37 acres of land, extending along the slope of the hill on the other side of the Monongahela and fenced in by boards. The Right Reverend Bishop has bought the whole estate for 9,500 dollars, on credit, and hopes in the future to get the necessary financial means enabling him to erect a regular suitable building on this very healthy place, free from the smoke of Pittsburgh. The house, bordering on the Bishop’s residence, and destined for the seminary in the beginning, did not prove suitable for this purpose; hence it was left to the teaching brothers who had come from Ireland last year, for the use of their schools. In the aforementioned small seminary building there are lodged fourteen pupils, seven of whom are studying theology and the other seven philosophy. I am presiding over the former in the capacity of a prefect and professor, and a young Irish priest is presiding over the latter in the same capacity. The whole house contains but four apartments: a study room which has to serve also the purpose of a house oratory, two sleeping apartments, and a room divided by a board partition into two chambers wherein the two teaching individuals are staying. There is no school-room proper; for, the one is giving instruction in his sitting-room and the other sometimes in the study room and sometimes in the refectory. The desks of the students are book-cases at the same time, but unfortunately almost without books; for the present it would be well, if they contained at least ordinary good text-books, but even these are yet wanting.³

From this letter it is evident that Father Mosetizh was made president of the theological department of St. Michael’s Seminary immediately after his arrival in Pittsburgh. Moreover he exercised great zeal for souls in the city and the surrounding country when his ordinary duties would permit, especially among the Germans, who then migrated to western Pennsylvania in considerable numbers, for there was a great lack of German-speaking priests. Owing to his remarkable zeal, learning, and prudence, he was appointed Vicar-General of the Diocese by the Bishop, soon after his arrival.

It seems difficult to determine the exact time, when this was done. Monsignor Lambing’s “Foundation Stones of a Great Diocese,” page

³ *Berichte*, Report XX, pp. 17–28.

242, states that Father Mosetizh's name first appears as vicar-general in the "Directory" for 1847, which would mean that he was appointed vicar-general in 1846; however, this could hardly be proved from the above mentioned source, which seems to make no reference to the office in connection with Father Mosetizh. I addressed his Lordship, the Right Reverend Bishop of Pittsburgh, requesting him kindly to consult the archives of his diocese and thus clear up the point in question, if possible, and received the following answer:

There are but scanty records of the official appointments of Right Rev. Michael O'Connor. After a diligent search I must report that I can find nothing that would enable us to fix the date of the appointment of Rev. John E. Mosetizh, Vicar-General. It was probably in 1847. . . .

Bishop Canevin's opinion is undoubtedly correct, for Father Mosetizh actually signed himself Vicar-General as early as September, 1847, if not earlier. He held this office at first only for the German Catholics of the Diocese, while Father James A. Stillinger was Vicar-General for the remaining faithful. But when the latter resigned in November, 1848, Father Mosetizh became Vicar-General for the entire Diocese and remained such till his final departure for Europe.

He took up the duties of this new position with admirable zeal and energy, for he fully realized its responsibility. He was always willing to lend a helping hand either to organize new congregations, or to build up those already in existence, wherever necessary. Thus he took charge, temporarily, of Erie and its missions in the latter part of September, 1847, attending them up to the middle of May, 1848, as there was no other priest to do it. During his stay of seven months and a half he had forty-nine baptisms, thirteen marriages, and twenty-three funerals which were not exclusively of the city of Erie, but also of the surrounding towns and villages.

In addition to this, his activities extended over many other places of the diocese, as is evident from the letter written by Bishop O'Connor to the Leopoldine Association of Vienna, January 10, 1848. With respect to our subject matter, this letter is rather incoherent, because it deals with the conditions among the German Catholics of the diocese and their religious needs in general. Yet it seems advisable to give those parts of the letter referring to Father Mosetizh just as they were written, because the conditions described there are interesting in themselves, and, moreover, they immediately concern our subject.

In this letter Bishop O'Connor emphasizes the need of two more German churches in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, one in Allegheny and the other in Birmingham. Then he goes on to say: "The Rev. Father

Mosetizh has already made all the preparations for the erection of a church at Birmingham, opened the necessary subscriptions of the faithful, and there seems to be every appearance of being able to make the start on it this year. Of course, the need of a church is still greater in Allegheny, but since there is no priest that could or would undertake the work, nothing can be done there.

"In the counties of Erie and Crawford there are about 1,500 German Catholics. These have a separate church in the city of Erie which in the meantime is attended to by Father Mosetizh whom I have sent thither from the seminary for a while in order that the faithful residing there may not be altogether deprived of the necessary care of their souls till I find a priest suitable for their spiritual guidance and direction. The church there is unfortunately very limited in space, and efforts are being made to enlarge it as soon as possible. Since I know this myself to be extremely necessary on account of the number of the faithful of the town as well as because of those meeting there from the neighboring villages, I have resolved to have a part of the donation from the Leopoldine Association sent to that parish. Father Mosetizh is making arrangements for the enlargement of the building and, trusting in his prudence, he may spend half of the aforesaid donation for the erection of a church in Birmingham, if he finds it advisable.

"The Germans living in Crawford County are attended to by the missionary of Erie. They just came from Germany, and intend to put up a church at Meadville, the main town of this county. I have left the matter to Father Mosetizh, and the building may be started with the coming spring."

Referring again to the money sent him by the Leopoldine Association the Bishop says: "I left \$950 to Father Mosetizh's free disposal to use it either for the erection of a church in Birmingham, or Meadville, or for the enlargement of the church at Erie according as he will deem it well."

"I number," continues the Bishop, "forty missionary priests in my diocese. Of these sixteen are German and seven understand the German language, at least so as to be able to minister to such parishes. In order that the German congregations may enjoy all care, I have appointed Father Mosetizh, Vicar-General for them in my diocese. He is at the same time president of the seminary and professor in several branches of theology. As I was forced to send him to Erie for some time, I am acting meanwhile as his substitute in the seminary, but only till he returns."⁴

Father Mosetizh returned from Erie to Pittsburgh in May, 1848. Whether he enlarged the church at Erie and built one at Meadville, I could not ascertain. Probably he did both. At least, the church of

⁴ *Berichte*, Report XXII, pp. 12-21.

St. Agatha at Meadville was founded in 1849,⁵ which would indicate that his efforts there were crowned with success.

A considerable number of German Catholics had settled around the seminary at Birmingham. As they possessed no church of their own, Father Mosetizh organized them in 1847, and began to take up subscriptions among them. On his return from Erie, a church was built upon a lot, donated by Bishop O'Connor, near the seminary. The cornerstone was laid, July 16, 1848, and the church blessed in honor of St. Michael the Archangel, by the Bishop, November 24, of the same year. Soon afterward this congregation was separated from the church of St. Philomena, Pittsburgh, where it had belonged, and became an independent parish when Father Mosetizh provided it with a pastor of its own in the person of a diocesan priest, the Rev. M. Schifferer. Thus the parish of St. Michael was formed which today is one of the largest parishes in Pittsburgh.

The city of Allegheny, then containing a population of some 20,000 souls, was still without a Catholic church. Its numerous inhabitants as well as the faithful from the surrounding country were obliged, like those of Birmingham, to go to Pittsburgh to fulfill their religious duties. Since there was no other priest to do anything for them, Father Mosetizh took the matter into his own hands. In the summer of 1848, he bought a piece of ground 150 feet square in the middle of Allegheny for the sum of \$6,000, and began to build a church upon it partly of brick and partly of wood. The structure was completed in three months, and solemnly blessed by Bishop O'Connor in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, December 17, 1848. A parishioner wrote on that occasion: "The Bishop preached a short and unctuous sermon wherein he expressed his delight in the zeal of the Catholics of this place, and our reverend pastor, Dr. Mosetizh, preached during the high Mass in his well-known excellent manner in the German language."⁶ This church was not large, measuring but 90 feet in length and 40 feet in width, and was destined for temporary use only; but it was neat and would do honor to many a parish even nowadays. The expenses of the church and lot were covered by the contributions of the people and partly by a loan.

How large this parish was when founded cannot be said with certainty. However, if we consider the fact that it numbered 194 baptisms, 27 marriages and 89 funerals from the dedication of its church to the

⁵ *Schematismus der kath. Geistlichkeit deutscher Zunge in den Vereinigten Staaten Amerikas*, p. 113. Milwaukee, 1892.

⁶ *Wahrheitsfreund*, Vol. xii, pp. 234-5.

close of 1849, we will be able to form some idea of the amount of work Father Mosetizh had to do. Hence he was given an assistant to share the burden with him in 1849. During his stay at Allegheny he lived in a private house.

We may well imagine that a congregation of such size had many children of school age. Special schools were opened for these at Allegheny by the Redemptorist fathers of Pittsburgh a few years before the arrival of Father Mosetizh, who now took possession of them and endeavored to keep them up to date. He succeeded all the more easily as he himself was an excellent teacher and a great lover of children.⁷

He had scarcely organized St. Mary's parish and provided it with the things most necessary when he left for Europe in compliance with the wish of his Bishop in order to secure some German-speaking priests for the diocese. For this purpose he visited several dioceses in Germany, and went to Austria in the beginning of 1850. He succeeded in obtaining a number of missionaries for America. For the diocese of Pittsburgh he secured four secular priests, among them Fathers George Gostenzhnik, John Stibiel, and J. B. Schafleitner, and a Carmelite priest, Joseph Theresius Gesowsky. Three Franciscan priests, Accurtius Gaertner, Firmin Eberhard, and Anselm Koch, were destined for the diocese of Nashville, Tenn.; Father Leo Susan went to Milwaukee, Wis.; Joseph Schneider, a theological student, joined the diocese of Chicago, Ill., etc. Some of these priests accompanied Father Mosetizh to America, others followed him shortly afterwards.

After his return from Europe, Father Mosetizh did not stay long in Allegheny. He left St. Mary's parish to his successor and former pupil, Father Stibiel, on the latter's arrival in October, 1850, and returned to St. Michael's Seminary where he thenceforth resided and labored as Vicar-General, rector and professor. From that place he wrote a report to the Leopoldine Association of Vienna, dated March 21, 1851,⁸ in which he states, among other things, the following:

My journey to Europe, which I undertook at the wish of my Right Reverend Bishop, Michael O'Connor, D.D., during the winter of the past year, to recruit laborers for the German portion of this waste vineyard of the Lord, has been crowned with the desired success, particularly in Austria, for there were assigned to me 3,000 florins from

⁷ *Gedenkbuch*, pp. 23-7, 142. He erected no school or residence at Allegheny; the building of 1851, mentioned by Monsignor Lambing (*History of the Dioeese of Pittsburgh*, p. 165; *Foundation Stones*, Vol. i, p. 242), was put up by Father Stibiel, his successor.

⁸ *Berichte*, Report XXIV, pp. 59-71.

the fund of the Leopoldine Association in Vienna to defray the diocesan wants for me as well as for the missionaries enlisted, and from the dioceses of Linz, Lavant and Gorizia I was followed to America by priests who are working with the greatest zeal and best success for the welfare of the rather forlorn German Catholics of this country. With these five new secular and religious priests from Germany, added to those who were here already, the diocese of Pittsburgh has, thanks be to God! tolerably well provided for the needs of its German faithful for the present.

Then he runs briefly over the history of the Catholic Church in western Pennsylvania, mentioning different missions, religious societies and institutions of the Pittsburgh diocese, and adds:

Provision for the new generation of the diocesan clergy is made with the erection of a diocesan seminary already since the year 1846. This has also a small foundation fund; nevertheless, in order to secure its existence, it has to be supported by yearly collections to be taken up throughout the whole diocese. There are twenty young men in it during the current year, one half of whom are studying theology, the other half, philosophy.

This letter was published in the "Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung" for 1852. In a note attached to it by the editor we read:

The Vicar-General reports with this letter to have contracted a grave disease which has broken his strength in such a manner as to render him unfit for further service in the missions of North America. According to this and further information he has, on account of his shattered health, actually left his missionary charge, and has again returned to his native Archdiocese of Gorizia.

He left Pittsburgh probably at the end of the spring of 1851. Shortly after that cholera broke out with great violence in the city, and compelled the seminary to close. Its students were sent to other institutions, and the seminary building was turned into an orphanage.

Father Mosetizh arrived in Austria, in 1851, and owing to the mild and invigorating climate of his native country he soon regained strength enough to be made pastor of Cernice in the valley of Vipava near Gorizia. On May 18, 1853, he was appointed Dean of the Cathedral Chapter in Gorizia, a most important position which he held for ten years. As such he died at Gorizia, September 7, 1863, aged 65 years.

Father Mosetizh was, as far as he is still remembered by the old priests, a man of great talents and an accomplished scholar.

REV. JOHN L. ZAPLOTNIK,
Omaha, Nebr.
